Training for a Licence with Surrey Dormouse Group

The Hazel Dormouse is a protected species, requiring anyone who handles dormice, or carries out surveys where dormice are known to be present, to hold a CL10 Class licence from Natural England (NE).

Surrey Dormouse Group (SDG) volunteers will be familiar with box checks being carried out under the leadership of a licence holder. Those of you who enjoy taking part under this supervision do not need to apply for a licence but, for anyone who wishes to apply for a licence with SDG support, please find more details below.

As well as attending the recommended training courses, anyone applying for a handling licence needs a considerable amount of practical experience in working with dormice, including box and site maintenance and dealing with other box occupants. Dormice need to be seen at all life stages and in different breeding conditions. Given the small population of dormice across our sites and the importance of gaining an understanding of all aspects of dormouse ecology and handling it can take, on average, 2 to 3 years to gain all the skills and experience required to apply for a licence.

SDG have put a managed scheme in place for volunteers wishing to be given one of the two required references from within the group. This ensures that trainees who are given a reference from SDG have demonstrated that they have achieved our required high standards of skills, experience and knowledge. When a trainee is considered ready to apply for their licence they will have experience in handling dormice at different life stages in order to carry out surveys under their own licence and to train others to a high standard, as well as the knowledge of dormouse ecology necessary in order to plan surveys and contribute to mitigation and habitat management plans relating to dormice.

Any member of the group who would like a SDG licence holder to be a referee when they apply to NE must be registered as a SDG scheme trainee. Volunteers must have been a member for at least one season and have attended at least five box checks to be eligible to join the scheme. In order to demonstrate the commitment required to be accepted onto the scheme, trainees are advised to carry out box checks on a regular basis and gain as much experience as they can, using the PTES Training log to record everything they do, with the site leader signing the log after each check. At the same time, they should get to know the site leaders who are mentors, before asking one if they would be prepared to take them on as a trainee when they have the capacity to do so. There is no central waiting list; it is up to the trainee to approach a site leader once they have got to know

each other. Mentors will be investing time and effort into the training so they need to be confident that trainees will also do the same. The number of SDG trainees is limited by how many the mentors can accommodate and train to the high standard required. It is, therefore, a rolling process, with spaces becoming available as trainees gain their licences.

The SDG mentor provides training for all activities involved in working with dormice, including handling, giving help and advice as required. The mentor reviews the trainee's experience and skills to identify any training gaps and then helps to fill those gaps, either at their own site, or by directing the trainee to another site leader who may be able to help. Trainees are encouraged to carry out some box checks at different Surrey sites to see how other licence holders operate. SDG trainees are given priority for any dormouse handling on a check and should make themselves known as a trainee if attending a site for the first time. All handling opportunities are given at the discretion of the site leader.

The SDG Training Log is issued on acceptance onto the scheme. SDG trainees also continue to record their skills and experience on their PTES Training Log, required by Natural England as part of the licence application and in case the trainee leaves the group but continues to gain experience with dormice elsewhere. The SDG Training Log has some extra requirements, such as leading a box check and helping at an event. Any skills or experience already gained and recorded on the PTES log are carried over to the SDG Training Log; there is no concept or penalty of 'starting again'. It is the trainee's responsibility to bring all paperwork on the day as logs will only be signed on the day of the check.

If required, the mentor may help to identify a second referee from within SDG, in which case the trainee must also demonstrate the required level of skills and knowledge to the second referee. SDG will not guarantee a reference to anyone who is not on the SDG scheme. Trainees who would like their second referee to come from within SDG are advised to make this known at the start of their training.

The trainee must provide details of their second referee to their mentor and, if the second referee is not a member of SDG or is not known to the mentor, the mentor may request that the second referee attend a box check with the trainee in order to gauge their level of experience and suitability as a referee.

It is expected that trainees will continue to make a contribution to the work of the Surrey Dormouse Group for at least two years after they have gained their licence. All our licence holders are invited, via a separate mailing list, to attend meetings and to contribute to group projects and policy, helping to shape the future of SDG, as well as being given the chance to become a site leader as opportunities arise.

Please email us with any questions relating to the Training Scheme:
info@surreydormousegroup.org.uk